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ABSTRACT

Many teachers feel unprepared to deal with disruptive student behavior, which can drastically decrease instructional time. This concern also contributes to general educators' reluctance to include students with emotional or behavioral disorders. Teachers will not use research-proven behavioral interventions unless they can be implemented with available resources and have clear simple instructions. These needs are met by the classwide peer-assisted self-management (CWPASM) program, which is based on two existing research-proven strategies: total class involvement in teams of peer partners and self-appraisal and self-monitoring strategies. CWPASM helps students learn to follow classroom rules, use appropriate social skills, and work productively within a teacher-managed, peer-assisted reinforcement system, with responsibility shifting gradually from teacher to peer-partner to student. The program has been used successfully with grades 4-8. This paper briefly describes evaluation of the program with seventh-grade inner-city students, lists procedures for teaching CWPASM, reports time and materials requirements, and discusses adaptations during an ongoing field test of the program in a rural school. Findings suggest that CWPASM is an effective and feasible approach to teaching students to take responsibility for their own behavior. Preliminary data from the rural setting suggest that CWPASM may be more effective in heterogeneous ability groupings. (Contains 24 references.) (SV)

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# A CLASSWIDE PEER-ASSISTED SELF-MANAGEMENT PROGRAM ALL TEACHERS CAN USE: ADAPTATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR RURAL EDUCATORS

Across the country there is little disagreement that the violent and disruptive behavior of youth, whether at home, in schools, shown in the media, or on our streets is a matter of national concern. Since young people spend approximately one-half their waking hours at school, schools are the sites of much of this violent and disruptive behavior. According to a National Education Association survey (Sautter, 1995), on any given day as many as 160,000 students stayed home for fear of such behavior at or on the way to school. Nationwide, 24% of all students in Grades 3 through 12 reported having been assaulted by another student (Lowry, Sleet, Duncan, Powell, & Kolbe, 1995). In addition to extreme acts of violence, schools and classrooms were frequently disturbed by less severe forms of disruptive behavior such as off-task, defiance, noncompliance, harassment, and intimidation (Nelson, 1996). Given these statistics, it is not surprising that the annual Gallup poll of the public's attitudes toward the public schools consistently identifies lack of discipline as the most serious problem facing schools (Rose & Gallup, 1999). Not only do many teachers feel unprepared to deal with disruptive behavior, they also believe that this behavior substantially interferes with their teaching and their ability to successfully include students with disabilities (Schumm & Vaughn, 1995). General educators' reluctance to include students with disabilities is perhaps most clearly evident with regard to the inclusion of students with or at risk for emotional and behavioral disorders into general education settings. For example, only 17% of students with learning disabilities compared with 34% of students with emotional disturbance were served in a separate class during the 1995-96 school year (U.S. Department of Education, 1998). Cotton (1990) estimated that only half of all classroom time was used for instruction, and most of the other half was taken up by disciplinary problems. The implications for all students and particularly the successful inclusion of students with disabilities should not be underestimated.

In West Virginia and rural parts of Maryland, this problem is exacerbated by personnel needs typical in rural states. Rural school systems have experienced the most severe and consistent difficulties in obtaining an adequate supply of new special educators to work in local schools (Helge, 1992). All too often, rural students with special needs may be unserved (with little or no access to a trained special educator) or underserved (experiencing a succession of untrained teachers and aides) (Ludlow, 1998). In addition to this, West Virginia schools have an aging population of teachers. In public hearings held in West Virginia on school violence, speakers consistently addressed the need to do more to train teachers to recognize troubled youth early, to be proactive in classroom and school-wide discipline, and to be trained in crisis management (U.S. Congress, 1998). Preliminary analysis of data from a survey of 70 rural educators from West Virginia and Maryland (Mitchem, 2000) confirms these findings. These teachers reported that the greatest challenge facing them in the classroom today is classroom management followed closely by adapting curriculum to meet student needs.

Teachers' lack of preparation and reluctance to include students with disabilities are not the only issues impacting services to students with disabilities. Developing effective new practices impacts few children if these practices are not adopted and sustained by practitioners in the field. The fact that sustained use of research-proven practices after the research study ends rarely occurs (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1996) is an issue that has concerned the field for decades (Lamke, 1955). This issue is arguably most noticeable in the area of classroom management--still one of the top rated concerns of educators and administrators everywhere (Mitchem, 2000). In

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order to bridge this research to practice gap, educators need training in practical, effective programs, which require minimal time, effort, and resources, and which can be adapted to meet the unique needs of the settings in which they work (Kauffman, 1996). Results from a survey of over 400 teachers working in both urban and rural settings indicated that the two factors which most influenced teachers' decisions to use research-based strategies were feasibility (defined as a teacher's ability to implement it given their current resources) and the availability of simple, clear, step by step instructions (Mitchem, 2000). Using these factors as a guide, we developed a program which teaches social and self-management skills using components of two research-proven programs, Class-Wide Peer Tutoring (Greenwood et al., 1997) and self-management (Young et al, 1991).

This paper shares the results of a collaborative project between a researcher and practitioner. First we address self-management's potential as an inclusive strategy. We describe the class-wide peer assisted self-management program (CWPASM) and the steps required to implement it. Then we summarize some quantitative data on the effects of CWPASM on appropriate classroom behavior of middle school students in an inner city school. We report some preliminary data on the implementation of CWPASM in a rural setting, its acceptability to students and feasibility for the teacher, as well as adaptations we made for this setting. Finally, we discuss the implications of these findings for practitioners and researchers.

Self-management programs typically involve some combination of two or more of the following strategies: self-monitoring, self-evaluation, and positive reinforcement. A successful program combines the strategies to teach students responsibility for their own social behavior and academic performance (Young, West, Smith, & Morgan, 1991). Researchers have documented the effectiveness of self-management at teaching students to regulate their own behavior, decrease reliance on adults, as well as promoting students' use of skills learned to non-training settings (McDougall, 1998). Teaching students to manage their own academic and social behavior may allow teachers to intervene with students demonstrating problem behaviors or academic difficulties and teach all students skills that promote responsible behavior. Self-management can help keep students on-task, reduce behavior problems, and teach students to be responsible for their own actions; as such, it represents an attractive strategy for general educators to use in inclusive classrooms.

CWPASM is a peer-assisted self-management program based on two existing research-proven interventions: total class involvement in teams of peer partners from Class-wide Peer Tutoring (Greenwood et al., 1997) and self-appraisal and self-monitoring from Young and colleagues' (1991) self-management program. It was designed to help students learn to follow classroom rules, use appropriate social skills, and work-productively within a teacher-managed, peer-assisted reinforcement system, gradually shifting responsibility from the teacher and peer-partner to the student. CWPASM involves instruction by the teacher in self-management, social skills, and self-monitoring activities and a reinforcement system to increase the frequency with which the behaviors were performed. Although designed and initially field-tested with 7th graders, the program has since been used successfully with 4th-8th graders. Teaching students to self-manage and play CWPASM takes approximately 90 minutes. Lesson 1 teaches students the definition, rationale, and benefits of self-management, the Antecedent, Behavior, and Consequences of self-management, and the classroom rules. Lesson 2 reviews the classroom rules and teaches students how to evaluate their behavior, mark and match with their partner, and report points. Table 1 describes the steps used to teach the procedures (Mitchem Young, West, & Benyo, in press).

The effects of CWPASM were evaluated using a multiple baseline design across three classes of 7th grade inner-city language arts students. Significant improvements in on-task behavior, instruction-following, and academic related skills were noted in the class as a whole and in 10 at-risk target students (Mitchem et al., in press). In addition, students rated the program as likeable, acceptable, and effective at improving their behavior and the classroom climate. The teacher (second author) who implemented the procedures also reported high satisfaction ratings with the goals, procedures, and outcomes, evidenced by her continued use of the procedures three years later with 6th and 8th grade students in a rural school. Although we are only part way through our field test of CWPASM in a rural school, we have collected some anecdotal data supporting the program's acceptability and effectiveness in this particular setting.

**Table 1: Procedures for Teaching CWPASM**

| | Step | Description |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | Define Self-mgmt | Teach students definition and rationale for self-management; elicit examples of benefits of self-management. |
| 2. | Define ABCs | Provide students definition of ABCs. Students label and provide e.g.s of ABCs. |
| 3. | Review Class Rules | Students review and role-play non-e.g.s and e.g.s of following class rules. Steps of selected target behaviors taught through modeling, practice, and role-play. |
| 4. | Rating System | Students learn rating system describing various levels of target behaviors, and points associated with each level. |
| 5. | Evaluate Behavior | Students learn to compare behavior and partner's with rating system, to prompt appropriate behavior, and to play the game. |
| 6. | Post Rules | Class rules, rating system, and descriptions of rating levels posted. |
| 7. | Assign Partners/ Teams | Students paired with a partner, each partnership assigned a number, and each pair randomly assigned to one of two teams weekly. |
| 8. | Mark & Match Cards | At cue students compare perceptions of their behavior with levels described and record rating for self & partner corresponding to performance. Partners compare rating of each other and complete own card. Points earned for partner's rating and bonus for "perfect" matches. |
| 9. | Report Points | Peer partners total points earned by both and announce total to designated point recorders who summarize team and partnership performance. |
| 10. | Identify Winner | Team with highest point average recognized as winner. |
| 11. | Mystery Match | To encourage accurate ratings, teacher mystery matches with two secretly selected peer partnerships and awards bonus for accurate ratings. |

After only a few days of implementing CWPASM with 6th grade music classes, we found that reports of the program's effectiveness and positive nature had spread through the school and community resulting in a number of visitors to the classroom. The teacher wrote in her journal:

> "The special ed. teachers have come to my classroom when a teacher assistant saw how I was setting up my class. They wanted to know how I learned what I am doing and would I help them. They also think the 6th grade teachers should have some training".

The second author was also invited to present on this program and its underlying principles at the classroom management class for new teachers in the district—a class she, as a new teacher, was supposed to take.

To document feasibility of the procedures, we collected data on the time to train the teacher and students in the procedures, the time the procedures required each class period, costs of reinforcers and additional materials, and accuracy with which teacher and students were able and willing to implement all steps. These data are reported in detail elsewhere (Mitchem & Young, under review). Here we report briefly time and material requirements. Once we had taught students the marking, matching, and point reporting procedures (90 minutes), playing the CWPASM game required only 2-3 minutes to report points at the end of class. The teacher copied and laminated one point card for each student. While this represented a substantial time investment initially, she is still using those same cards with different students one semester later.

Originally, we had planned on allowing the team that earned the most points each week to select a reinforcer for the entire class (e.g. reading period outside, 15 minutes game/free time, an opportunity to make up work or do extra credit work). However, when we implemented CWPASM in the inner-city school, we found that students could not agree on a reinforcer and decided that they were more interested in which team won.

CWPASM has now also been used with seven 6th grade and seven 8th grade classes in a rural school. Here students noted explicitly that they did not need or want to "get anything' for their points. They were more interested in learning which team had earned most points and whether they (and their partner) had improved.

One difference we have noted is typical of rural schools. All students were bussed in, some from 15-18 miles away. This has meant that the teacher has had to adapt some consequences to fit with the bus schedule. Working with students one-on-one after school was not possible because of the transportation issue. Also many of her students had chores to complete after school in addition to homework, so in some cases although parents were supportive of students taking responsibility for their actions, they noted that their child had other responsibilities, too. Other differences in our use of CWPASM in the rural setting occurred in part because of the structure of the classes. The teacher quickly recognized that students are ability–grouped. She noted in her journal:

> "What I have noticed is the lack of social skills in some of the students. Especially in the special ed. students whom I have just learned are mainstreamed without an explanation. It seems that once they come up from the elementary they are put into regular ed. without many resources other than a smaller class size. This is a big difference for me. I teach 7 classes daily. My 5 larger classes are my on-grade level or advanced students. The two smaller classes (15 and 18 students) are my lower skilled students".

The difference that ability-grouping can make became evident the first day she introduced the class to her students. The teacher wrote:

> "Most of them caught on right away. Or at least my on grade or above level classes have. It will be interesting to see how they do with the game and if it carries over into other classes and at home. But I would have to say the response from the students is good so far. It took more time to explain the game to my second class. This just so happens to be the class that I found out on the first day they would be a challenge. I'm not too convinced they actually have the idea"

A few days later, she comments:

> "The students seem to be happy with the actual game so far. I am going to do a hand survey tomorrow to see if they are finding it acceptable or not. My challenging ones may not still really understand what it is I am asking. When there were students who could help me to model what is appropriate it was easier; not having students in a class who know what it is to demonstrate is difficult. I find that maybe the smallness isn't the real key—it may be that students need more opportunities to see appropriate behaviors that I can draw attention to. Usually I'm the only one modeling the appropriate ones".

Ultimately, we decided to modify the procedures for the two smaller classes. The teacher noted that with all the students on the same level, peers rarely modeled appropriate behavior. In addition, having peers help one another to understand what was expected did not occur as often as it did with heterogeneous groupings. We decided to have students simply record a plus each time when they heard a chime and they were doing what was expected. The teacher provided many examples, demonstrated the behavior, and sounded the chime on the average every 2 minutes. By the end of the period, most students understood, although the teacher noted that she still had to challenge some students' ratings.

**Discussion and Implications**

Even with the existence of many effective strategies to address inappropriate behavior and to facilitate the inclusion of students with disabilities, adoption and sustained use of these by practicing teachers is a major concern. In this paper we have described a classwide peer assisted self-management program designed to address feasibility issues inhibiting sustained use of research-proven interventions. Our studies of class-wide self-

management in an inner city school and a rural school suggest that CWPASM is an effective and feasible approach for educators to teach students how to take responsibility for their own behavior. Findings from CWPASM implementation in the rural school are preliminary, qualitative in nature, and must be interpreted with caution. Nevertheless, the results from the study in the inner city school (Mitchem et al., in press) indicated CWPASM was acceptable and feasible for teacher and students and effective at improving appropriate classroom behavior of the group and target at-risk students. Preliminary data from the rural setting suggest that CWPASM may be more effective in heterogeneous groupings. This tentative finding should be empirically tested with other groups of students and other teachers.

Other implications of this research derive from the issue of what teachers indicate influence their use research-proven practices. As noted earlier, classroom management remains a top-rated concern of teachers and administrators despite the existence of proven effective management practices (Stage & Quiroz, 1997). Preliminary analysis of survey data (Mitchem, 2000) indicates that teachers want programs to be feasible and have simple step-by-step instructions on how to use them. This is neither new nor surprising information. What is surprising, is that teachers still perceive the absence of feasible interventions with simple "how-to's" to be the greatest obstacle to their use of research-proven interventions. This suggests a compelling need for researchers to re-examine not only their development of feasible classroom interventions, but also their dissemination of these interventions in simple, step-by-step terms. The medical field, responding to this same research-to-practice gap, has formed the Cochrane Collaboration of Effective Clinical Practice to prepare and keep up-to-date reviews of the effects of interventions to improve professional practice (Bero & Grilli, 1998). In analyzing why teachers fail to choose and continue to use empirically supported interventions, perhaps we should also critically examine the most effective and efficient interventions to improve educators' professional practice.

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